

PERENNIAL

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27.05 - 06.07.2011

Arnaud Hendrickx, Michael Van den Abeele and Richard Venlet present Perennial.

Perennial is a temporary auditorium, thought of as a salon, shaped as an event. The term "perennial" refers to the cyclical blooming of plants, as well as to the notion of universal recurrence of philosophical ideas, through times and cultures. Assuming that future visions are projected memories, sublime and outer worldly perspectives can also be conceived as projected interiors. Perennial as salon and auditorium will function as a model of this hypothesis.

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- Miniature sarcophagus containing itiphallic pseudo-mummie of Osiris-Sokaris Egypt, reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (309 BCE – 246 BCE), private collection
- 2. Magna Turris Château Gaillard 1198. Scale model 1/50, Arnaud Hendrickx, 2010
- 3. Paul van Hoeydonck; Fallen Astronaut, 1971, collection MuZEE Ostend
- 4. Orchidaceae, Robert Delight (blue)
- Giuseppe Terragni with Pietro Lingeri; Danteum. Scale model 1/50, realisation prof. Dirk De Meyer and Peter Claeys, Edward Marchand, Maarten Delbeke, Olivier Claeys, Kris Coremans, Bart Boonen, Marc De Buyne, studenten, courtesy Vakgroep Architectuur en Stedenbouw, Universiteit Gent, 1993
- 6. Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys; Fritz, 2010
- 7. Ettore Sottsass; replica, Temple of erotic dances (the Planet as Festival series), 1973
- A. URANIUM LEAD CLOCK.

Evening program (start 8 pm)

Wed 01.06 Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, video premiere

Fri 10.06 Christian Waldvogel – Globus Cassus,

lecture

Wed 15.06 Mark von Schlegell - book-lecture

Fri 24.06 to be confirmed Fri 01.07 Erik Thys – lecture

Wed 06.07 Dirk de Meyer – Giuseppe Terragni's

Danteum, lecture

Stay focused on the stone. Look at it, protractedly and from every possible side. Initially one chooses the stone for its attractive appearance, but it suffices to look at it long enough that it becomes interesting.

To start with, around 200 BC, Chinese connoisseurs and other erudite persons in regard to aesthetics, began to decorate their gardens with large stones. Stones, as they were encountered in nature; rough. The stones were initially chosen based on their coincidental resemblance to famous mountains and mountain ranges or mythical places like the Isle of the Immortals. Over the years, however, the qualifications became more abstract, and the stones were increasingly being appreciated simply for their dramatic form, their wonderful colours or the feelings they brought about in their viewers. This was the beginning of the Gong-shi culture; literally, the Spiritual Stone.

Stones of every size were collected and admired for their surfaces, which suggested great antiquity; for their robust profiles that evoked the grandeur of nature; for their hollows, worn for centuries by water, and perforations that made rhythms and harmonic patterns visible.

The Gong-shi sholars developed their own topographical nomenclature. A stone had to meet certain conditions in order to be accepted as Gong-shi, and a minimum requirement was that the stone had to be aesthetically interesting from at least five different standpoints. The Gong-shi studies were refined through the centuries and became a highly valued Art.

Then there was a meteorite, which fell from the sky in 861 AD and ended-up in Nogata, Japan. It should definitely have tempted some travelling Gong-shi scholars to shift the subject of their observation. The gaze remained focused on the terrestrial stone, but this was now a model for a more fundamental meditation on nature in its widest scope. And what initially was dismissed as an apocryphal theory by the Establishment, steadily evolved into an obscure but orthodox doctrine.

Although the classic studies of the Gong-shi already led students to the presumption that the landscape, and nature in general, has no need whatsoever for Life in order to arrive at all the complex forms of symmetry and elegance that man usually designates as beautiful or aesthetic, this apocryphal doctrine went further by considering as the spearhead of its study just this ontological position of life

Sound composition - Erik Thys

in regard to nature.

One needs only to think of mountain ranges, minerals and crystals, or caves filled with stalactites, in order to realise that for all this dazzling splendour, not the least amount of vegetation is needed. Stone-dead, nature and the world are no less elegant, so stated the new teaching. This was only the beginning of what through the coming centuries developed into holistic thinking.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Gong-shi made a popular entry into the West and became better known as scholar stones, and roundabout the mid-twentieth century the meditative made a definitive place for the decorative. In the meantime, the radical undercurrent of the Gong-shi studies remained focused on the stone, held the universe in its mind, and digested the thought that, however one twisted or turned it, life was not the essence of the universe. Life was overrated. Not without value, certainly not, but by no means the essence of the universe.

For every grain of sand on Earth there are more than 100 stars in the cosmos. Fire will always be burning somewhere. Above our heads, under our feet. Without cooked vegetables and roasted meat the human brain could never have obtained its current mass.

This drastic minimalisation of life need not be confused with melancholy, or a romantic obsession with death. And nor is it about a form of nihilism. The Gong-shi radicals considered their findings an emancipatory consequence and their observations generally brought them into a pleasant form of ecstasy. Comparable with the way in which trance and the so-called emptying of self, reduces life to a technical something, a stowage. A detachment the time is the basic requirement is for any true form of Space exploration.

In the case of the stone it is more correct to speak of digestion of time rather than perception of time. Ten millimetres per two millennia is the average growth of a stalactite. In contrast, a human grows fastest during the first two years of life and at the end never attains more than two metres. The chance encounter of a human who bumps his head into a stalactite, and the effects thereof, are similar to the meeting between humankind and extraterrestrial life, so much desired by scientists. Sometimes occasions just miss one another. Painting has, for example, grandiosely missed the Dinosaur as a theme and let the rug be pulled out from under itself by Computer Generated Imagery.

Keep watching the stone. For the Gong-shi philosophers, observation became the key. If observing lay in the extent of absorption, then the first algae, through photosynthesis -- and oxygen as waste product thereof -- were already set-up for the observing of the universe.

The conclusion of Gong-shi fundamentalism was the notion that they lived in a Possible Universe that has evolved such that from the outset it was technically determined for the development and maintenance of the Observation of the Universe itself. In other words, a universe with predetermined feedback. Life on earth was one of those feedbacks. Possibly there were or were to come other feedbacks in the universe. Life on earth is the carbon-based variant, but on a geologically deep time scale, carbon chauvinism quickly goes out of fashion. Science and space exploration, and all popular culture that

emerges therefrom, stare themselves blind with the question of whether there is other life in the universe, a quest that stands in the way of a fundamental understanding of the universe. What do astronauts and scientists hope to find once they have reached the obscure heart of the cosmos? A sort of cosmic version of Colonel Kurtz from Conrad's Heart of Darkness, an obscene exaggeration of himself?

The Gong-shi pupils gather together and observe a stone. One among the many billions. And yet there is always the question of a genuine choice. This stone and no other. And often the decision is correct, though no one can exactly reason why. Classic nomenclature is hardly ever applied. Moreover, it is no longer about beautiful or attractive stones. A good and strong stone is automatically appreciated as aesthetic in the long term.

Assuming that atoms could exist without electron shells, a being that was built of them would move as freely through stones as a human through thin air. It would probably feel more at home in the earth's deepest core than on its surface. Such beings would experience the geological digestion processes, such as crystallisation or the formation of minerals and ores, the way humans, animals and plants experience the wind and the rain, or the light and the changing of the seasons.

Their attention would not be directed outward, not toward the cosmos and the stars, but toward the core of our own planet. The world on the surface would seem to them like a ghostly appearance, and life as mere fleeting shadows. Another density, another perception of time.

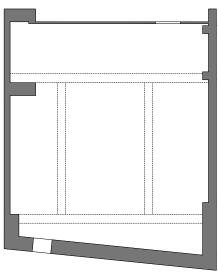
On the other hand, it must be said that ordinary atoms
-- just by dint of those electron shells -- are for the most
part constructed of empty space, and if human perception
were not so subject to multiple sensory conventions, the
world would likely appear much more transparent.

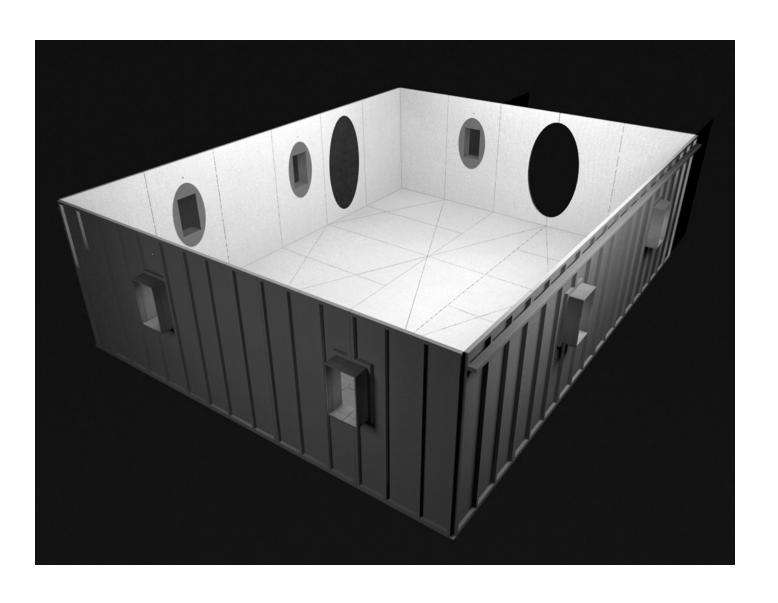


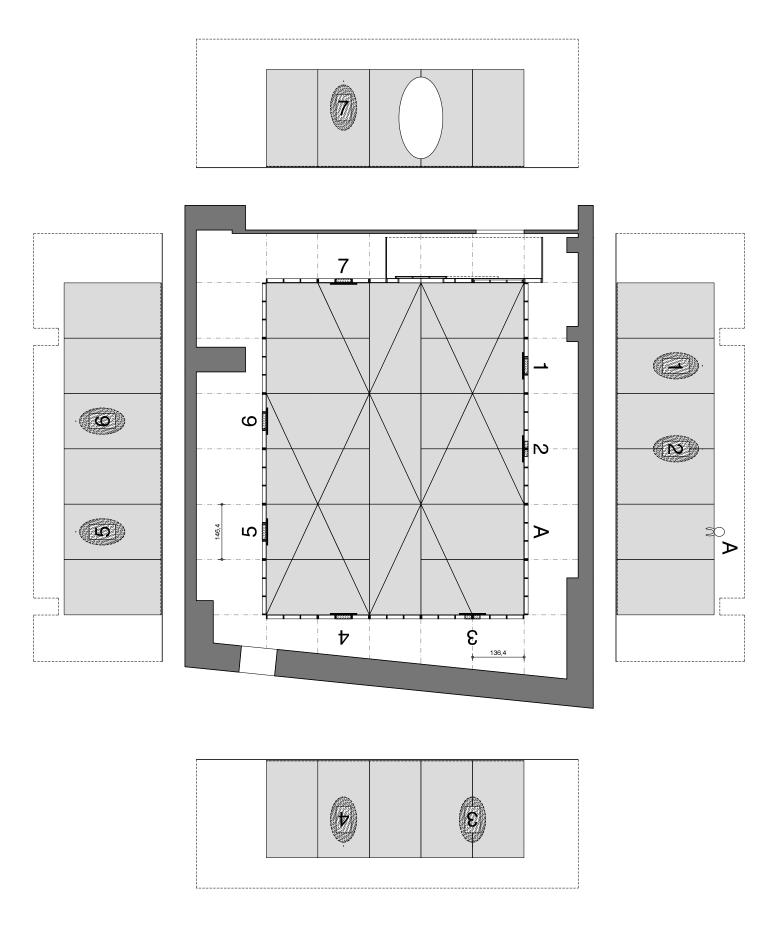














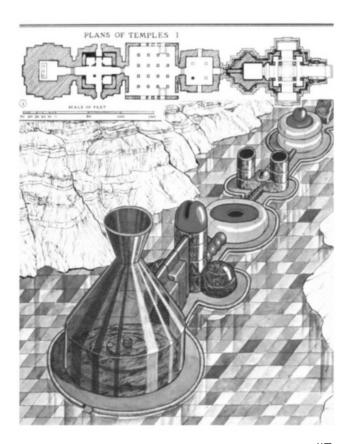






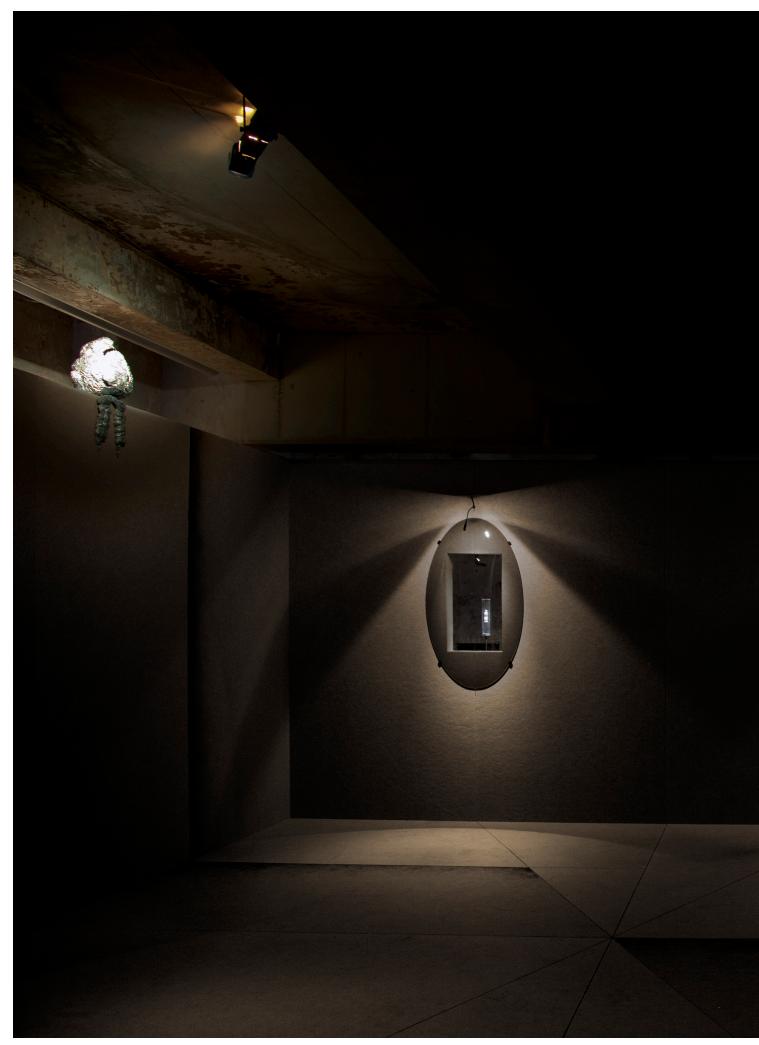


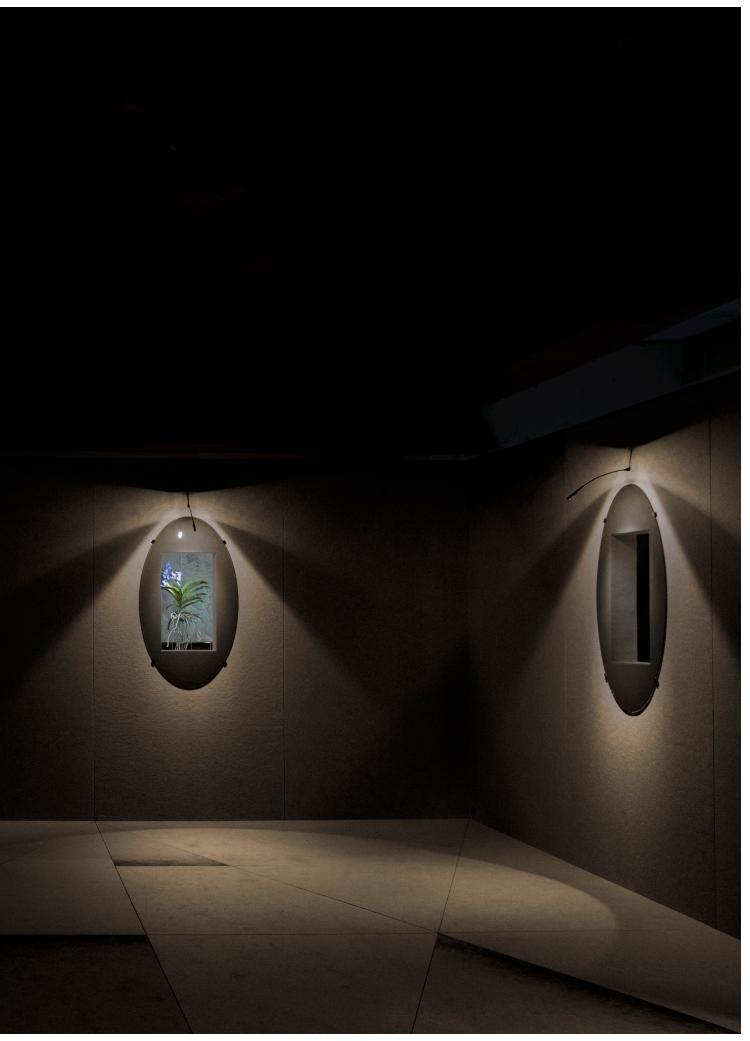












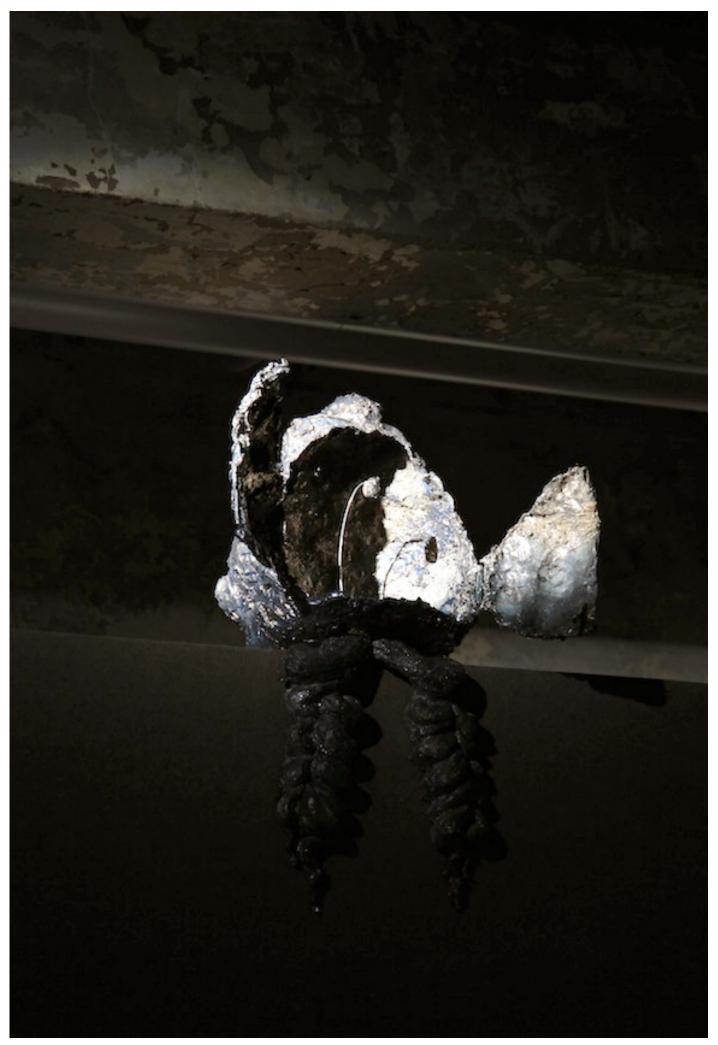


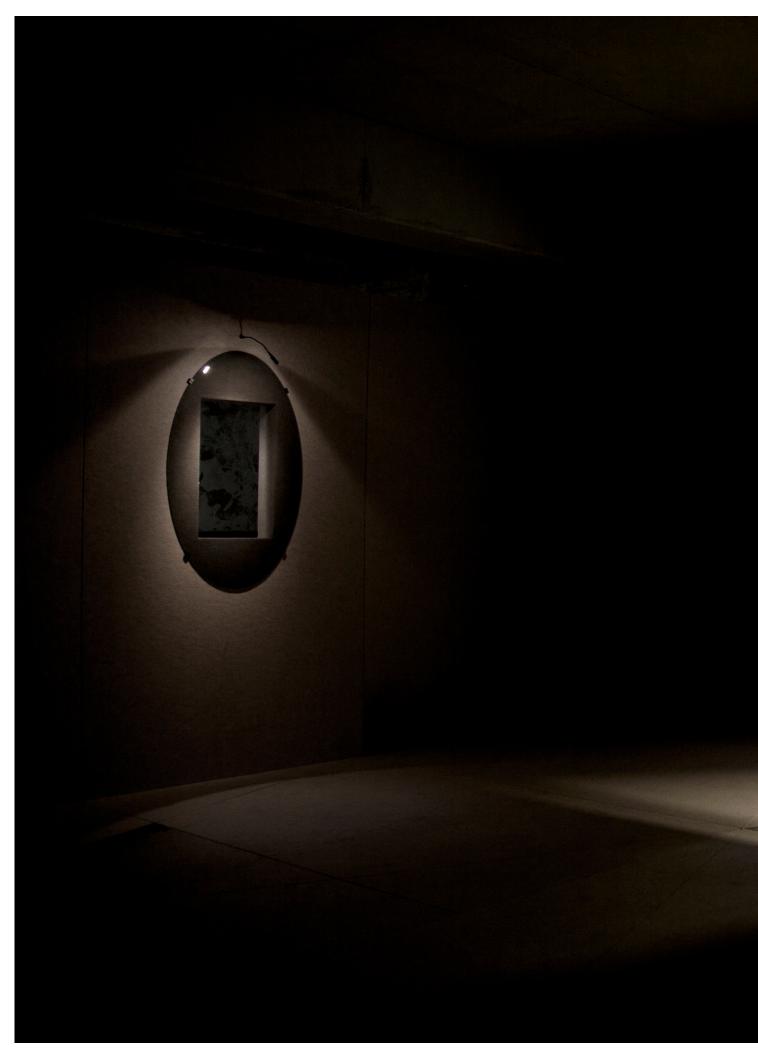




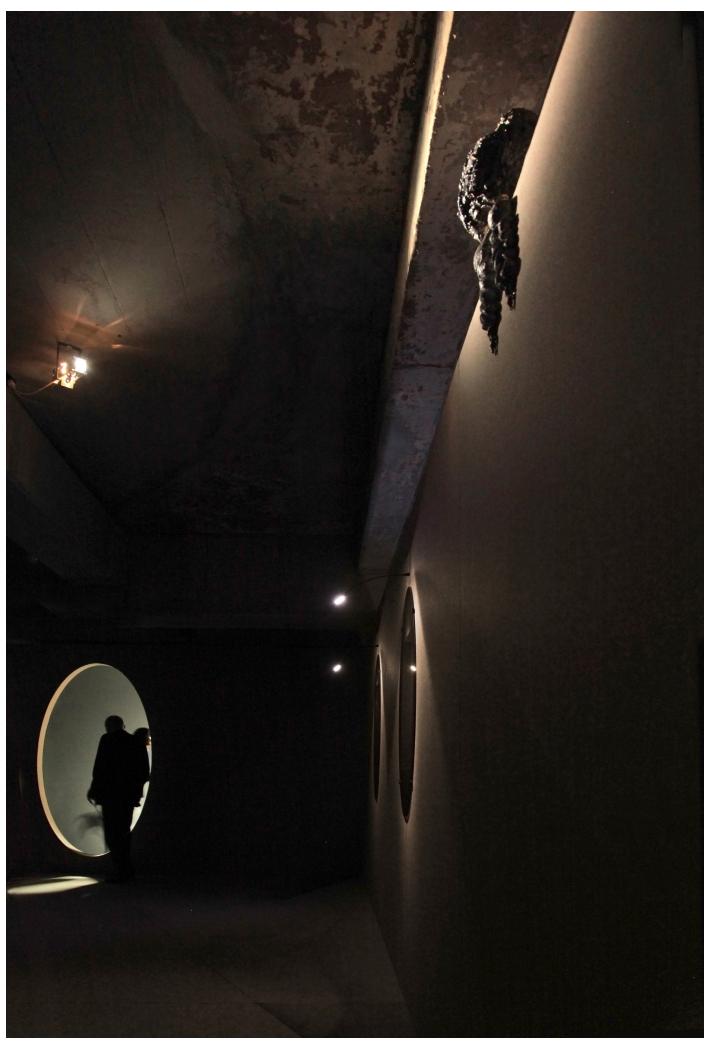








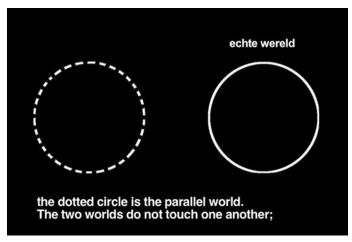




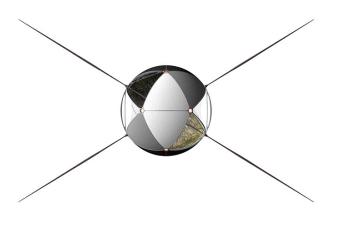


THE EVENING PROGRAM THAT WAS OFFERED OVER THE COURSE OF SEVEN WEEKS INCLUDED SEVEN CAREFULLY SELECTED **EVENTS** LIKE READINGS, SCREENINGS AND PERFORMANCES.

#1:	27.05	OPENING
#2:	01.06	PREMIERE OF TWO VIDEO WORKS JOS DE GRUYTER & HARALD THYS
#3:	10.06	GLOBUS CASSUS ARCHITECT CHRISTIAN WALDVOGEL
#4:	15.06	LIFE OF A SENTIENT PLANT SCI-FI WRITER MARK VON SCHLEGELL
#5:	24.06	BUTOH PERFORMANCE BUTOH DANCER NANAMI KOHSHOU
#6:	01.07	SPACE AND THE SOUL PSYCHIATRIST ERIK THYS
#7:	06.07	TERRAGNI'S DANTEUM HISTORIAN PROF. DIRK DE MEYER



#2: JOS DE GRUYTER & HARALD THYS



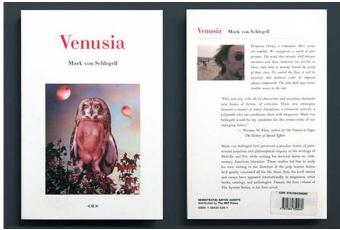
#4: CHRISTIAN WALDVOGE

'Über die farben und ihre bedeutung' (2011, video, colour, sound, 16') is a treatise on the colours and their meaning. This is the Belgian premiere of the most recent film by Jos De Gruyter and Harald Thys, conceived as part of the exhibition 'Objekte als Freunde' (27.05.11-14.08.11) at the Kestnergesellschaft Hannover.

'Über das Verhältnis der wirklichen Welt zu der parallelen Welt' (2010, video, black-white, sound, 25') is a study of the relationship between the real world and the parallel world and how they influence each other. The film supports the hypothetical tendency to visualise this parallel world as one-dimensional. It is a world where time and space are of a different order, a one-dimensional white world without light or dark. The film was first shown as a part of PROJEKT 13, an exhibition in the Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland.

Swiss architect and artist Christian Waldvogel will present his project Globus Cassus; a conceptual transformation of Planet Earth into a much bigger, hollow, artificial world with an ecosphere on its inner surface. The project consists of a meticulous description of the transformation process, its construction, and the organizational workings on Globus Cassus. Globus Cassus was the Swiss contribution to the 2004 Venice Architecture Biennale. The accompanying publication was co-edited by Boris Groys.

"Globus Cassus is an antipode to the world - not only spatially, but also in time. It is the precisely drawn up opposite of the world, and it is meant to be thought about, not to happen. It is therefore set in the infinite future, which in Celestia translates into 09/09/9999, starting at 09:09:09 in the morning."



#4: MARK VON SCHLEGELL

Mark von Schlegell (born in the US, based in Cologne) began his career as a cultural critic to become a science fiction author. He is the author of the novelette High Wichita and the novels Venusia (2005) andMercury Station (2009) both published by M.I.T./Semiotext(e). His experimental fiction and cultural criticism appears regularly in the international art community (his recent essay Dan Graham science fiction can be read at http://readfree.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/dg_vonschlegell.pdf). Mark Von Schlegell is the curator of the group-exhibition Distopia, currently showing at the CAPC musée d'art contemporain in Bordeaux.

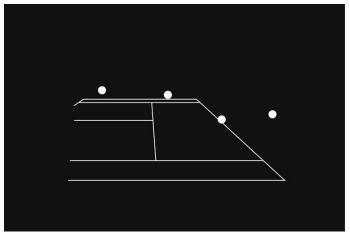
The reading for this occasion is entitled The secret life of a sentient plant.



#5: NAMAMI KOHSHOU

Nanami Kohshou is a Butoh dancer and choreographer based in Paris. From 1982 he made music and theater before turning to Butoh in 1999. Ankoku-Butoh, or 'Dance of darkness', first appeared in Japan following World War II. Dancers such as Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno influenced by German expressionistic dance and Japan's industrial and rural landscape, found a non-formal mode of expression that broke with the influence of Western classical dance and Japan's traditional theatre. Like decaying Kabuki troupes Butoh dancers relearnt their body from scratch finding techniques both mental and-physical to tap into its impulses and drives.

Organized in collaboration with Theo Cowley



#6: ERIK THYS

The unfathomable darkness of space mirrors the strangeness of human consciousness. Are we intelligent machines that have no direct contact with anything, or are we connected with everything? Are our minds more than our brains? Does the soul exist?

Without hope or fear, the recent discoveries of brain science are discussed.



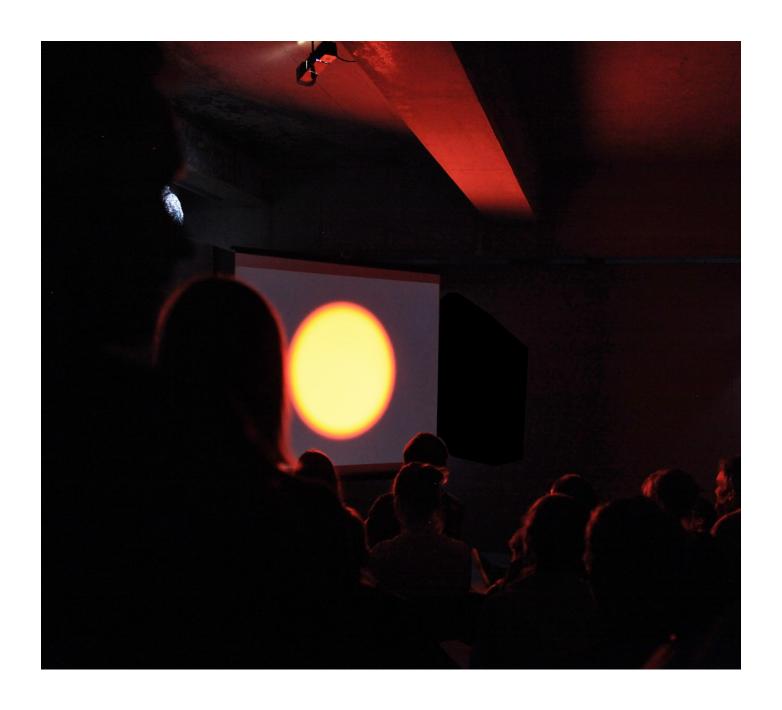
#7: DIRK DE MEYER

In 1938 the Italian architects Giuseppe Terragni and Pietro Lingeri presented to Mussolini the project for a Danteum, a temple and library dedicated to the great Italian poet. The real program of the building, however, was a symbolic one: a setting for the canto'sof Dante's Divina Commedia, while putting emphasis on what Dante represented in the politics of the day: Italian unification and imperial pretentions.

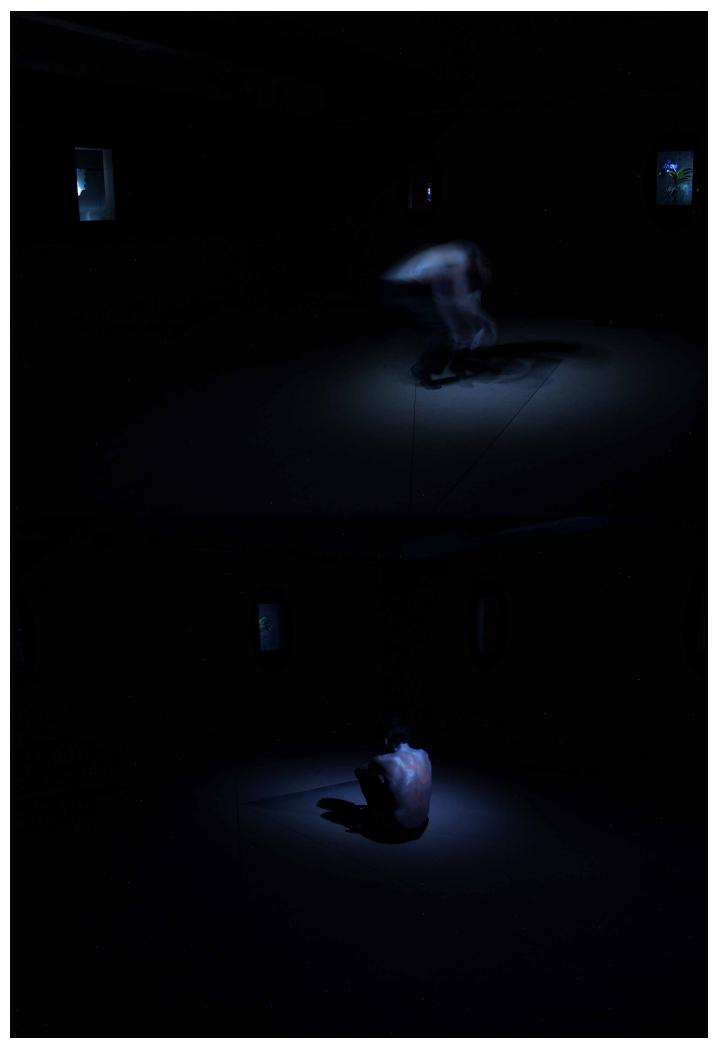
Although some critics have desperately tried to bring Terragni's work back within the reassuring fold of the Modern Movement, it has always disrupted the conventional norms of the relationship between the modern and the classical. The Danteum in particular remains a building outside of and beyond time.

Nevertheless, the lecture will try to anchor the project in its time, and discover its exceptional and intimate interactions between literature, architecture and politics.

















Perennial (2011)

- 1. Invitation drawing.
- 2-3. Exhibition text, including transcript of the 'Gong-shi' lecture given by the Uranium-Lead Clock.
- 4-5. Wiels contemporary art center, Future auditorium space used as storage, Brussels, Belgium.
- 6-7. Design for Perennial.
- 8-9. Seven artefacts part of Perennial.
- 10-23. Perennial installation views.
- 24-32. Perennial events.

Photography

Arnaud Hendrickx Richard Venlet (14, 15, 28) Theo Cowley (29)